may recover atleast 50% of operation and maintenance charges initially. These cities/towns should graduate to full O&M cost recovery in a phased manner".

Completion of Irrigation Project in Punjab and Maharashtra

3330. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of irrigation projects are running behind their original schedule as on date in Punjab and Maharashtra;

(b) whether Government are considering to invite private participation to complete such irrigation projects in the State;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the remedial steps proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) Yes; Sir.

(b) Irrigation is a State subject and the planning, execution, funding, operation and maintenance of irrigation project are primarily the responsibility of the State Governments based on their priorities. There is no proposal under consideration of Ministry of Water Resources to invite private participation to complete irrigation projects in the States. The State Government of Maharashtra is considering to invite private participation to complete such irrigation projects.

(c) and (d) The Government of Maharashtra has issued a Government Resolution in July, 2003 regarding the policy to be adopted for taking irrigation project works on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis. As per this policy of the State Government various concessions are given to the prospective entrepreneurs willing to take the works on BOT basis. The Central Government launched the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) in 1996-97 to provide Central Loan Assistance (CLA) for such approved irrigation projects which are in an advanced stage of construction and beyond the resources capability of the State as per the guidelines of the programme.